



A flock of seagulls flutters on Riverfront Plaza, in front of the restored cotton

warehouses that are now Savannah's main tourist attraction.

Savannah

In a town designed for carriages, the Southern pace still runs slow

SAVANNAH, GA. — The old city hall clock runs on its own time. It rings three gongs at 5:28 a.m., when the rising sun sheens the river and the old waterfront.

A gong-and-a-half at 5:42 as the light creeps up the cobbled sweep of Factors Walk. And six resounding gongs at 6:01, when the full sun has gleamed the green dome of the tower and reached into the plazas, heavy with live oak.

I am at eye-level with the old clock tower here in my sixth-floor room at the Hyatt-Regency Hotel, which opened April 1 in this coveted riverside location.

There has been a lot of activity out that window since the big ships began hoisting their way in and out of the harbor at dawn.

AN OLD man nearly fell off the city hall roof trying to hoist the flag above the clock. I was staring down at the restored historic riverfront buildings when two window washers appeared on a scaffold outside my window.

The new hotel, and all this activity, are signs of new life for tourists in this old-south city, with decaying downtown streets only recently rescued from oblivion.

The industrial port is busy, and the smokestacks smear the distant sky, but travelers will find that old Savannah still runs on slow Southern time.

This clock tower vantage point gives a good view up through the plazas on Bull Street and down the old river bluff, but the best way to see Savannah in its setting is from the air.

More than 100 miles of coastal islands run from Savannah south to the Florida border. Wildlife refuges encircle the city: birds nesting in marshland, an osprey flying high over the trees, a single donkey plodding across a lonely sand dune.

JAMES OGLETHORPE brought settlers to this junction of river and sea in 1733, to create an English buffer between the Spanish colonies and Florida.

Several forts built during the next 200 years are restored, and visible from the air, on the islands which are now suburbs of Savannah.

You can see the shrimp boats gleaming below the plane, and the great container ships coming in from sea. Finally, the skyline of the city with old church spires and domes mixed with contemporary high-rises in a living garden of trees.

You can get an even closer look from Cap'n Sams Riverboat, which runs regularly here from the wharf near the city hall. An old harbor light still stands in Emma's Park at the top of the bluff, and a statue commemorates the Waving Girl, who waved ships in and out of the harbor for 47 years.

RED TUG boats make friendly patches of color against the Riverfront Plaza, where a permanent seagull population flutters in front of the restored cotton warehouses that are now Savannah's main tourist attraction.

Restaurants, bars and boutiques occupy the front of the simple four-story buildings. Factors Walk, where cotton factors once sold their wares, sweeps around the back of the warehouses, under wrought iron bridges that lead you from the top of the bluff to offices and shops.

Historic buildings were being systematically demolished until the Historic Savannah Foundation went into action in 1955. Now a historic homes tour is one of the highlights of the city.

Savannah was designed for carriages, and cars made their way up the bluff and around the plaza, the main intersection.

THE SQUARES spread green with live oak trees, and brilliant in the sun. The squares are the heart of Savannah. For reasons unknown, the square is never empty. It is the hero whose statue rises in its center.

Restored old buildings offer a treasure of elegant bed-and-breakfast places in Savannah. The "1790" is one of the best known for either accommo-



travel log
Iris Jones
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lions or dinner. The newest addition is the Ballstone Inn, which has the traditional wrought iron stairway curving up to its second-story door.

These historic inns are expensive, but many travelers choose to spend \$50 a day (\$75 for two) for the gracious old rooms, and the grand in-your-room breakfast. The Hyatt and the DeSoto Hilton are the two best known contemporary hotels, but there are also less-expensive small hotels such as the John Wesley Hotel on Abercorn.

THE BEST known old restaurants are the Pirates House, a maze of nicely restored comfortable small rooms in a building that has hosted seamen since the 18th century, and a European-style inn called the Old Pink House.

Insiders will send you to Miss Wilkes Boarding House, where they ring a bell and say prayers before dinner; mounds of Southern food and no alcohol at big round tables.

Everybody goes to Spanky's for beer and pizza between stained glass windows on the waterfront. Locals love the "1790" for after-work drinks and gourmet dining.

Probe a little further and you'll learn about places where tourists seldom go. To Wall's, for example, for the best stuffed crab in town. ("Take it out, don't eat it there.")

And to the place that all of Savannah would like to keep a secret: the Crystal Beer Parlor, where you get honest chili, good oyster stew and fried chicken in a quiet dark atmosphere that makes travelers sob with relief after all that elegant and pseudo-sophisticated dining.

YOU CAN easily walk to any of these places from the city center near the old Town Hall. The clock tower somehow rises into your line of vision from every Savannah street corner.

Don't set your watch by it, because it will ring three gongs at 5:02 and a gong-and-a-half at 7. But you will grow to appreciate a city that runs on Southern time.

For information on Savannah, contact the Savannah Visitors Center in its wonderful restored railway station setting at 301 W. Broad St., Savannah, Ga. 31402.

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Savannah's graceful plazas maintain the traditional Southern pace of life.

N.Y.-to-Toronto train returns after a decade

Now you can incorporate a trip to the Big Apple while vacationing in Canada. VIA Rail Canada and Amtrak have joined hands to provide train service between Toronto and New York City.

Called the Maple Leaf, it represents the first cooperative venture of its kind between the two national passenger rail corporations and marks the return of a Toronto-New York City through service after an absence of over a decade.

Consisting of Amtrak's Amfleet equipment, the new train will be operated and staffed by VIA personnel in Canada and will run over Canadian tracks as far as Niagara Falls, Ontario. There crews will be changed, and responsibility for the train will transfer to Amtrak as the Maple Leaf crosses the border bound for New York City.

Departing Toronto daily at 9:05

a.m., the Maple Leaf will service Oakville, Burlington West, Hamilton, St. Catharines and Niagara Falls, Ontario before crossing the border. Stateside, the train will service Buffalo, Rochester, Syracuse, Albany and several other points before arriving in New York City at 8:05 p.m.

A one-way fare from Toronto to New York City will cost \$74 Canadian, with a 30-day round trip excursion fare available for \$105 Canadian. The regular one-way fare to Buffalo from Toronto will be \$12.50 Canadian. A circle fare is also available for travel between Toronto, New York, Montreal and back to Toronto (via Ottawa if so desired) for \$118 Canadian.

The Maple Leaf started service April 26.

For details on this service, contact a travel agent.

Economy helps

State campgrounds expect good season

Michigan's private campground operators expect one of their best seasons as more families vacation close to home and camp to stretch their summer recreation dollars, according to the Automobile Club of Michigan.

"The state's continuing economic problems are helping spur a turn to camping vacations which began last summer," said Auto Club Touring Manager Joseph Ratke.

More than 63 percent of the 261 private campgrounds responding to an Auto Club survey reported business up an average 6 percent last summer. Thirty-four percent reported business drops and 3 percent reported no change. That compares with 1979, when more than half of those surveyed reported a business drop.

So far this spring, the number of season leases — renting a site for the entire summer — are up nearly 30 percent over last year at many private parks, more than a month before the season's traditional Memorial Day holiday start.

Many operators also report short-term reservations approximately 5 percent above last year, with most campers planning longer stays than in the past, the Auto Club said.

Other indications that more persons are choosing Michigan and camping for their vacations are a 6-percent rise in sales of state-park entry permits despite a \$3 price increase and Auto Club's first-quarter statistics showing a 15-percent rise in member routing requests for Michigan destinations, when compared with the same period in 1980.

Prices and services are among the main reasons campers are choosing private parks, Auto Club said.

PRIVATE PARKS surveyed by the Auto Club will charge an average of \$6.42 nightly for a campsite with electricity. State parks charge up to \$6 nightly, plus a \$2 daily or \$10 annual entry fee. There is also a \$3 fee to reserve a state-park site, with no such fee

at private parks.

Private park owners plan a number of activities for campers, ranging from conducted bus tours to nearby cities and hikes through secluded forestland to family-oriented events such as hay and horseback rides, cookouts, free movies and dances.

Because of state budget cuts, services including interpretative programs and lifeguards will be limited at many state parks.

Auto Club's 1981 private-park guide lists 359 facilities with 34,361 sites, more than half the state's approximately 60,000 campsites.

State-park campsites total 13,984, up 72 from last summer. There are 3,375 state-forest campground sites, 162 less than a year ago. Federal and county, township and city sites number 2,415 and 8,200, respectively.

Campers planning a private campground stay will find swimming either in pools or lakes at 256 facilities. All but three have at-site electricity. Water and sewage hook-ups are available at 282 and 150 parks respectively.

Besides seasonal site leasing offered at 283 private campgrounds, campers can save gasoline by storing motor homes and trailers at 241 facilities for monthly fees. There is no storage at state parks.

To encourage stays in northern-Lower and Upper Michigan, reservation rules have been eased at certain state-park campgrounds. Families may reserve sites by telephone any time before arrival. Reservations must reach all other state parks at least seven days before arrival.

Parks where telephone reservations are accepted are Aloha and Cheboygan near Cheboygan, Burt Lake near Indian River, Hoef near Rogers City, Interlochen near Traverse City, Young near Boyne City, Orchard Beach near Manistee, Clear Lake near Atlanta, Onaway and North Higgins Lake near Roscommon, and all Upper Peninsula state-park campgrounds.

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